



ESTELLA FORD WARNER

*“No Need for Acclaim . . .
But to Perpetuate
Influence She Generated”*

Dr. Estella Ford Warner, who retired this year after a distinguished career with the Public Health Service, takes to her adobe home in Albuquerque the warm affection, deep respect, and unqualified admiration of all who have known her. Her retirement is not the occasion to pay her tribute, because she does not need acclaim. Although she has been honored many times, honors are superfluous to her. These comments are offered primarily in the hope that they may help to some degree to conserve and perpetuate the influence she has generated.

When Dr. Warner was recruited for the Public Health Service by Dr. Warren Draper in 1932, she was known both here and abroad for her development of State and county maternal and child health services in Oregon. Although she had a flourishing practice in pediatrics in Portland, where she had earned a medical degree at the State university, she took up public health work because of her conviction that “the best road to good child health is preventive medicine on a community basis.”

The first woman to enter the commissioned officer services of the United States, Dr. Warner was an important addition to the Public Health Service both as a physician and as an administrator. At all times, she has personified competence of a very high level.

Her direct contributions to public health have been described elsewhere, if all too briefly.

They are an important element in the chronicles of world health progress, and it is to be hoped that some day they will be celebrated in history as they deserve. The strategic value of her work with mothers and children, with indigenous primitive tribes on reservations in the southwest, with families of warworkers housed in trailers and other temporary quarters during the war, with Federal assistance to State health departments, and with expanding health services in Asia is yet to be seen in perspective.

The achievement in itself is impressive. The effects of programs she advanced for malaria control and sanitation in India alone are certain to extend and enrich millions upon millions of lives.

While what she has done commands respect, these achievements are noteworthy as well for the spirit and method of their accomplishment. Perhaps this is best indicated by the fact that of all those men and women who have been assigned to her staff, there are none who speak of having worked “for” Dr. Warner. It is not an affectation when they say they worked “with” her. It is a tacit and grateful acknowledgment of the fact that in every endeavor she created a pervading sense of shared purpose and action.

She took to heart the doctrine that democracy is a way of working as well as a way of living. As a division chief, she demonstrated her characteristic ability to accept and make use of new ideas and methods. Since it was not in her

nature to be authoritarian, she was always as ready to hear from her staff members as to give counsel and guidance.

Her accomplishments have been world enriching, her methods inspiriting. She has attained the high goals she set for herself and, in so doing, has established new goals for those who follow.

With such concepts and attitudes, it was to be expected that her office would be the source of creative ideas in public health, that it would be eager to perform real functions rather than to pretend to formal responsibilities, that it would constantly evaluate, and reevaluate, the performance of public health services.

On the eve of her retirement, she was continuing to encourage health workers in foreign missions to write what they observed and what they were doing about public health, in line with her constant wish to focus health concepts on living processes.

If further tribute is to be paid to Dr. Warner by her colleagues, they can do no better than apply her concepts, to be sensitive to public needs, to observe and report what is being done and what can be done, and to proceed in concert to meet public needs as they are understood.

—By LEONARD A. SCHEELE, *Surgeon General, Public Health Service.*

On Rehabilitation

“In Salt Lake City recently, over a 6-month period, half the applicants for public assistance whose need was due to a father’s desertion were handled by a trained social worker who stressed the services that would help cure the problem. The other half were handled routinely—their need was established and payments were made, but no special help was given in eliminating the cause of need. At the end of 6 months, assistance payments to the families who had received professional self-help services were 41 percent less than assistance payments to the other families.

“In New York City, over a period of 3 years, a skilled welfare staff focused on a direct effort to return persons to self-support. Of a total of 2,700 cases, involving persons who had been unemployed from 1 to 19 years, 616 were restored to independence as a result of services provided by social workers. The savings in the actual cost of assistance has been \$616,000 per year. But far more important than the savings of tax dollars is the promise of a richer life for human beings.

“In New York State, 3,600 disabled persons were returned to employment and a self-sustaining life through vocational rehabilitation last year. These people were earning less than \$1.5 million a year when they started on the road to self-support. The first year after rehabilitation, their earnings were estimated at more than \$8 million—almost a six-fold increase.

“In the Nation as a whole, more than 11,000 of those rehabilitated last year had been receiving public assistance payments. It cost about \$8 million to rehabilitate this group—but in just one year it would have cost almost \$10 million to maintain them on relief. Relief costs generally were stopped and earnings and tax payments were started, but the richest reward from this program is the conversion of misery and despair into hope, dignity, and a productive life.”

—MARION B. FOLSOM, *Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare.* From an address before the Rochester City Club, Rochester, N. Y., March 3, 1956.